
Promising Practice Fact Sheet – Workforce Development

KEYSTONE EDUCATION YIELDS SUCCESS (KEYS) Pennsylvania

Program

Description: Helps TANF/SNAP clients succeed in community colleges via career counseling, tutoring and broad range of supports (e.g., college laptop loan program). Pennsylvania allows up to 24 months vocational education and has introduced “vocation-specific work experience”, paid internships and practicums that count toward federal participation.

Target Population: TANF and food stamp clients

Goal: To help clients succeed in community colleges via career counseling, tutoring, and supports (e.g., college laptop loan program)

Cost: \$3.5 million per year

Evidence: KEYS administrative outcome data but no evaluation to date

Caseload Data: Approximately 1,000 active participants.

Assessment: Screened, assessed, and referred to community colleges by County Assistance Offices; at cc, client has a Student Facilitator for guidance and support

Services Overview:

- Program helps clients succeed in community college by providing career counseling and tutoring; broad range of support services (from child care, transportation, and school fees to eyeglasses, hearing aids, car purchase and repaid, and union dues).
- County Assistance Offices (CAOs) refer the parents to the community college where they are assigned Student Facilitators.
- Parents can go to college full time to achieve AA degree and not work because it is a Vocational Education program. (The state has opted to extend the time from the 12 month federal limit to 24 months; the second 12 months doesn't count as federal participation but the number of KEYS clients between 12 and 24 months is small enough to have negligible impact on the state's participation rate).
- Internships and practicums are counted as “work experience” or “job skills training”; Pennsylvania has recently introduced a new core work activity, “vocation-specific work experience” (VWE) which pays KEYS students in internships and practicums while still counting as federal work participation.
- Student Facilitators continuously work with students, making sure they have what they need to succeed. They give extra support services and even have access to additional funding.
- Ratio of Facilitators to parents is 1 to 30.
- Student Facilitators housed on campus so parents have easy access to them for individual attention.
- Provides connections to other community service agencies.
- Provides access to colleges' laptop loan program.
- If parent does not attend college in summer they are required to find their own job or activity for participation.
- Parent must enter program before their 60th month on TANF.

Eligibility: TANF and food stamp recipients

Findings:

- Average graduation rate since KEYS – 10-20% depending on region (no data on prior rate)
- KEYS graduates earn \$14.77/hour compared to \$8.00/hour for other current and former public assistance clients.

Implications for policymakers and program developers to consider:

- Small on-site case management caseloads (Student Facilitators)
- Broad range of support services (including laptop loan program)
- Incorporation of paid internships and practicums into degree programs as core work activities.
- KEYS has found compelling ways to boost public and legislative support for the program.